

Americans Slightly Taller, Much Heavier Than 40 Years Ago

Adult Americans are roughly an inch taller than they were in 1960, but they are nearly 25 pounds heavier on average, according to a report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The report, *Mean Body Weight, Height, and Body Mass Index (BMI) 1960-2002: United States*, shows that the average height of men ages 20-74 increased from just over 5 feet 8 inches in 1960 to 5 feet 9 1/2 inches in 2002, while the average height of women the same ages increased from slightly over 5 feet 3 inches in 1960 to 5 feet 4 inches in 2002.

Meanwhile, the average weight for men ages 20-74 rose dramatically, from about 166 pounds in 1960 to 191 pounds in 2002. The average weight for women the same ages increased from about 140 pounds in 1960 to 164 pounds in 2002.

The report, issued in October 2004, indicates that the average weight for men in 2002 compared to 1960 increased more among older men:

- Men ages 40-49 were nearly 27 pounds heavier.
- Men ages 50-59 were nearly 28 pounds heavier.
- Men ages 60-74 were almost 33 pounds heavier.

For women, the near opposite trend occurred when comparing average weight in 2002 with that in 1960:

- Women ages 20-29 were nearly 29 pounds heavier.
- Women ages 40-49 were about 25.5 pounds heavier.
- Women ages 60-74 were about 17.5 pounds heavier.

The report also documented a slight increase—less than an inch—in average heights for children over the last four decades. However, average weights for children increased significantly:

- Ten-year-old boys in 1963 weighed 74.2 pounds on average; by 2002 the group's average weight was nearly 85 pounds.
- Similarly, the average weight for 10-year-old girls in 1963 was 77.4 pounds; by 2002 their average weight was nearly 88 pounds.
- The average weight for 15-year-old boys in 1966 was 135.5 pounds; by 2002 their average weight was 150.3 pounds.
- Fifteen-year-old girls on average weighed 124.2 pounds in 1966; by 2002 their average weight was 134.4 pounds.

Average body mass index (BMI) has also increased among adults from about 25 in 1960 to 28 in 2002. BMI is a number that represents an individual's weight in relation to height. BMI is generally used as the first indicator in assessing body fat and has been the most common method of tracking weight problems and obesity among adults. A BMI of 18.5 to 25 refers to a healthy weight, those with a BMI of 25 to 30 are considered overweight, and people with a BMI of 30 or higher are classified as obese.

The average BMI for children and teens has increased as well:

- In 1963, the average BMI for 7-year-old boys was 15.9; in 2002 it was 17.0. For girls the same age, the average BMI increased from 15.8 to 16.6 over the same period.
- In 1966, the average BMI for 16-year-old boys was 21.3; in 2002, it was 24.1. For girls the same age, the average BMI increased from 21.9 to 24.0 over the same period.

The data in the report were based on actual body measurements taken as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics has conducted periodically since 1960.

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For More Information

Mean Body Weight, Height, and Body Mass Index (BMI) 1960-2002: United States (620 KB PDF file)

www.cdc.gov/nchs/

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